



THE BLOGS

Fred Maroun

FEATURED POST

Debunking 25 left-wing and Arab myths from a left-wing Arab perspective

I'm left-wing and Arab myself, but no, I don't believe this conflict is really a dispute over land

Left-wing and Arab enemies of Israel make a number of accusations that they repeat as if they were facts. Here I take apart those myths from a left-wing Arab perspective.

I summarize the facts, but I include many links to other articles that provide further background. Some of the articles referenced are mine, where I reference

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journalistic integrity, including The Times of Israel, The Jerusalem Post, and The Gatestone Institute.

This article is not for everyone. It is intended only for a narrow audience: People who are willing to base their opinions on facts and [not lies](#). Others are kindly advised to stay away, lest they be contaminated by facts that they would rather continue ignoring.

1. “Israel can end the conflict by withdrawing from the “West Bank””

I would welcome the creation of a Palestinian state, but I would be lying if I said that the possibility is realistic under current conditions. Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza, and the resulting transformation of Gaza into a terrorist base shows what happens when Israel withdraws unconditionally. Since Israel left Gaza in 2005, many thousands of rockets have been fired from Gaza into Israel and many tunnels were built to try to infiltrate Israel. As reported by [Haaretz](#) in 2014, an online clock timer showed “how much time has passed since the last rocket was fired; Sadly, this counter never really gets above an hour”.

Israel cannot afford to make the same mistake in Judea & Samaria (the [correct name](#) for the “West Bank”) which is much closer to Israel’s large cities than Gaza is. If Israel withdrew from Judea & Samaria unconditionally, [it is virtually certain](#) that the newly evacuated land would be controlled by terrorists dangerously hostile to Israel. Until Arabs agree to a reasonable solution that provides Israel the security it requires, Israel’s military presence in Judea & Samaria is [fully justified](#), and even as an Arab, if I want to be honest with myself, I have no choice but to support it.

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referred to as the Green Lines) was legitimately acquired by Israel in a war of self-defence. Judea & Samaria and Gaza were also legitimately acquired by Israel in another war of self-defence in 1967 when several Arab armies congregated around Israel with the objective of destroying it. Israel later gave back the vast majority of that land in a peace agreement with Egypt, it voluntarily relinquished Gaza, and it voluntarily agreed to allow the Palestinian Authority to administer a large part of Judea & Samaria, referred to as areas A and B. What disturbs me as an Arab is that Arabs have at every turn made the wrong decisions, leaving them with less land, and even now that the Palestinians have had a chance to show their administrative capability in Gaza and parts of Judea & Samaria, they transformed Gaza into a terrorist base and they chose to [fund terrorism](#) in Judea & Samaria.

3. “Gaza is an open-air prison / under siege”

When Israel voluntarily left Gaza in 2005 under the hawkish Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and evacuated all Israeli settlements, it imposed no blockade on Gaza. Even the anti-Israel Al Jazeera [admits](#) that the blockade “has been in place since Hamas violently took over power from Fatah in 2007”, two years after Israel’s withdrawal. The blockade was imposed by Israel and Egypt only after the Hamas authority in Gaza started attacking Israel. The purpose of the blockade is to stop Hamas and other terrorist groups from obtaining weapons with which to attack Israel. The legitimacy of the blockade was even [recognized by the United Nations](#), not usually known as a friend of Israel since it is controlled by a majority of countries hostile to the Jewish state.

A siege is defined as surrounding and attacking a fortified place in such a way as to isolate it from help and supplies, for the purpose of lessening the resistance

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Gaza Strip carrying food, medical equipment, fuel, building materials, agricultural inputs, textile products and more”.

In 2005, the Palestinians of Gaza had a choice. They could have used their newly acquired freedom to build a strong economy in that coastal and fertile land, or they could have used that freedom to fight Israel. The fact that they chose the latter is not Israel’s responsibility, and it is not too late for Gaza’s Palestinians to choose a different path. As an Arab, I hope that they do so for their own sake.

4. “Israel is an apartheid/racist state”

Israeli laws and police practices do not give preference to any race. All ethnicities, including Arabs, are [treated equally](#). Freedom of religion is also guaranteed and strictly enforced, and so is [protection of holy sites](#) of all religions. One proof that Israel values diversity is its [fast growing](#) Muslim population. The only preference given to Jews is that Jews have an unlimited right of return to Israel, under the Law of Return, which is understandable considering that one of the reasons Israel exists is to be a haven for Jews who are persecuted elsewhere. Any of many Muslim and Christian countries, some of which are very rich, could provide such a law for Muslims or Christians if they so wished, but none of them do. Israel should be praised by leftists like me for ignoring race, gender, level of education, and economic background in order to accept and support any Jews who wish to return to Israel.

Israel also guarantees freedom of assembly, movement, and voting to all citizens, which include Arabs. There are a dozen Arabs in the Knesset (Parliament) and an Arab judge of the Supreme Court. Further, Arabs are very

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5. “The “West Bank” is an even worse apartheid”

Judea & Samaria is indeed an apartheid system, but [to the disadvantage of Jews](#), not of Arabs. Arabs can live and travel anywhere in Judea & Samaria, although Arabs who do not hold Israeli citizenship cannot live in the 1% of Judea & Samaria that consists of Jewish communities, and they must have a security permit to visit. Jews, on the other hand, can only live in that 1% and cannot even travel to large portions that are controlled by the Palestinian Authority (PA). Overall, Arabs have far more rights and far fewer restrictions in Judea & Samaria than do Jews. The [ban on Jews](#) in PA-controlled areas reflects the Arab world’s attitude towards Jews since Arab countries have expelled practically all Jews they once had.

As a left-wing Arab, I think that the Arab inability to accept Jews among them is shameful and counter-productive. Religious and ethnic diversity is an asset, not a weakness.

6. “Jewish settlements in the “West Bank” are illegal”

There are reasonable legal opinions on both sides of the question of whether Jewish settlements in Judea & Samaria are illegal, but there is no dispute on one fact, which is that the Arab deportations of Jews from Judea & Samaria during the war of 1948 were illegal and even criminal. The return of Jews to that land is only fair, and there is no reasonable rationale as to why Jews in Judea & Samaria [should not be welcome](#) within a Palestinian state if such a state was formed on that land, unless one is to accept that [Arabs are incapable](#) of living peacefully with Jews.

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7. “It is the Israel-Palestinian conflict”

At the time when Israel gained independence in 1948, those who referred to themselves as [Palestinians](#) were the Jews. Zuheir Moshan, PLO Commander from 1971 to 1979 said, “The Palestinian people does not exist. The creation of a Palestine state is only a means for continuing our struggle against the state of Israel for our Arab unity.” But even if we accept a distinct Arab Palestinian identity, it is very clear that the conflict is not between Israelis and Palestinian, but between the entire Arab world and the Jews, as indicated by the Arab world’s [refusal to accept](#) the 1947 UN partition plan that gave the Jews [a tiny state](#) where they had only a slight majority.

Arabs had a choice from the start, and [they still do](#): accept the Jewish state and [benefit from Israel](#)’s contributions to the Middle East, or fight the Jews tooth and nail. It is unfortunate for Arabs like me that they chose the latter. The Arab world is very slowly moving towards acceptance of Israel, but we are not there yet, and the support that the Arab world still provides to the Palestinian extremists in continuing the conflict is an important obstacle to its resolution.

8. “Trump caused Arabs to riot in Jerusalem”

The attacks on Jews in Jerusalem date back to long before US President Donald Trump was involved in politics. In the war of 1948, Israel [barely retained](#) part of Jerusalem, the Jewish residents were forcibly exiled from the portion that the Arabs occupied, and Jewish religious sites were [destroyed and desecrated](#). After the war of 1967 during which Israel took back all of Jerusalem and annexed it, [no Arabs were deported by Israel](#), and Israel even voluntarily granted Jordan guardianship of “Haram al-Sharif”, the Islamic holy site on the Temple Mount.

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Mosque if it wished to do so, but it does not, yet that lie is still repeated, and it is the cause of Muslim riots.

[Trump's declaration on Jerusalem](#) was simply the recognition of a fact. Trump, in my opinion, did not go far enough, and should have declared [Jerusalem indivisible](#) and fully part of Israel; a position that [Barack Obama](#) expressed six months before he became President. Arabs like myself who are truly concerned about preserving all religious sites and all religious rights in Jerusalem are quite pleased with Israel's administration of Jerusalem.

9. "Israel threatens Lebanon"

As a Lebanese person, I want what is best for Lebanon, and that would be peace with Israel. Israel has [absolutely no interest](#) and has never had any interest in occupying or threatening any part of Lebanon. Its only interest has been to prevent terrorist attacks from Lebanese soil, first by the PLO then by Hezbollah. It is the [Hezbollah-controlled Lebanon](#) that insists on maintaining a state of war with Israel, and that state of war does not benefit the Lebanese people. It only benefits Hezbollah and its Iranian master by giving Hezbollah an excuse to remain armed and to maintain an illegitimate control over Lebanese institutions.

10. "Israel is run by a right-wing government that is no better than Hamas"

The [analogies between Hamas and Israel's Likud party](#) are nothing more than a dishonest attempt to demonize Israel. Israel has accepted, and even initiated, on several occasions, partition plans that would have seen the creation of a

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Palestinians, whereas the PA has consistently refused. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu even released hardened terrorists in an [attempt to kick-start](#) peace talks, and as an Arab who opposes terrorism, I thought he went too far, but it is certainly a proof of his commitment to peace. Before him, Menachem Begin negotiated peace with Egypt, and Ariel Sharon withdrew unconditionally from Gaza; both were considered hawkish right-wing Prime Ministers.

Palestinian authorities, on the other hand, continue to [encourage terrorism](#) and to refuse to pursue peace. That is the real obstacle to peace.

The Netanyahu government is right-wing by Israeli and Western standards, but it is in fact far to the left of any Arab regime, including on the issue of peace. Left-wing people, as well as peaceful Arabs, have [every reason to support Israel](#), and no reasonable excuse for opposing it.

11. “Israel commits genocide against Palestinians”

This is the most absurd of all the myths. The populations of Palestinians in Gaza and Judea & Samaria [keep growing](#) by record numbers. Even the Ma'an News Agency, a Palestinian news agency, reported in 2011 that since Israel's independence in 1948, the Palestinian population [had grown 8-fold](#); this is an average of 3.4% yearly growth rate, far higher than the average world population growth, which [varied between 0.8% and 2.1%](#) during the same period. If Israel is attempting to massacre Palestinians, it is the most ineffective genocide in history. Yet we know that Israel's military is powerful and extremely effective. Israel has clearly never shown any inclination towards genocide.

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embarrassed that my fellow leftists and Arabs sink so low as to make this highly callous and calculated accusation.

12. “If some Palestinians behave badly, it is out of desperation”

There are hundreds of groups worldwide that are actively seeking independence and typically under far worse conditions and with far fewer options than the Palestinians. Those include Armenians in Azerbaijan; the Jumma people and the Bengali Hindus in Bangladesh; a dozen different groups in Burma; Mongolians, Tebetans, and Uyghurs in China; Abkhazians, Ossetians, and Armenians in Georgia; seven groups in India; and many others over all continents. If any of these groups was offered a state, as Palestinians were offered several times already, it is highly unlikely that it would have turned it down, yet terrorism is typically a very rare occurrence among those groups.

Palestinians have been mistreated and continue to be [mistreated by Arab regimes](#), and they face [apartheid](#) in Arab states (which, as an Arab, I am ashamed of), and some may be understandably frustrated that they do not yet have an independent state, but they receive extensive support and [funding](#), and they do not face any sort of genocide at the hands of Israel. Compared to practically any other group that seeks statehood, Palestinians have far less reason to feel desperate, yet they are extensively involved in terrorism. Hamas even [admits](#) to targeting civilians while predictably claiming to have excuses to do it.

Palestinians have had many choices to make over the last 70 years, and they have far too often made [the wrong ones](#). Palestinian terrorism continues in fact because Palestinians are not desperate and can afford, due to international aid,

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13. “Israel created the Palestinian refugee crisis”

There would not be a single Palestinian refugee today if the Arab world had accepted the 1947 UN partition plan, which the Jewish leaders did – even PA President [Mahmood Abbas](#) admits that the Arab refusal was a mistake. Both Jewish and Arab refugees resulted from a war that Israel did not want but the Arab world imposed on Israel. While the Israel-Arab conflict generated 711,000 Palestinian refugees, [it also generated](#) 856,000 Jewish refugees from Arab lands. The [Jewish refugees](#) were absorbed by other countries, mostly Israel, but the Arab world refused to absorb Arab refugees, keeping them in camps with limited rights. As an Arab, I regret that the Arab world lost the richness of diversity that Jewish Arabs offered, and I am angry that the Arab world uses Palestinian refugees as pawns against Israel.

In 1952, the UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees) director, Sir Alexander Galloway, put it bluntly when [he said](#), “It is perfectly clear that the Arab nations do not want to solve the Arab refugee problem. They want to keep it as an open sore, as an affront against the United Nations and as a weapon against Israel. Arab leaders don’t give a damn whether the refugees live or die.” The Arab world, not Israel, created the Palestinian refugee crisis and ensured that 70 years later, it is still not resolved. Imagine if Canada, 70 years after a Syrian refugee came here, he, his children, grand-children, and grand-grand-children were still considered refugees and had much less rights than citizens? There is no doubt that it would be denounced as racism and xenophobia, yet the Arab world gets away with the same crime when it comes to Palestinians.

14. “The conflict is a dispute over land”

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has never been about land but about Arabs rejecting Jewish self-determination in the Middle East. After the 1967 war during which Israel took a significant amount of land in a war of self-defence, Israel sought to return land for peace, but the Arab world's response was [three Nos](#): no peace, no negotiations, and no recognition of Israel.

Why are my fellow Arabs so afraid of one tiny Jewish neighbour? I never understood that.

15. “Zionists are the new Nazis”

Like the accusation of genocide, this accusation is easy to refute and is mainly meant to bring back painful memories for Jews. Nazism was marked by two significant aspects: Military expansionism and a form of racism/bigotry that led to the coldblooded murder of ten million non-combatants, including six million Jews. But Israel is not engaged in any racist activity and even less in any genocide. Israel's wars were always undertaken in self-defence to stop military and terrorist attacks. Any land acquired by Israel was legitimate under the laws of war, and Israel has already returned the vast majority of that land (most notably the Sinai which alone is more than double the size of Israel) in exchange for peace, and it would have returned even more if [Syria](#) and the [Palestinians](#) had agreed to peace agreements that Israel was willing to accept.

In addition to the Jews not being “the new Nazis”, what disturbs me most as an Arab is that it is in fact the Palestinians who in the past had [ties to Nazis](#) and who today, as explained by Palestinian writer [Bassam Tawil](#), behave in ways that are similar to the Nazis.

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the dishonest anti-Zionist rhetoric is very small and very marginal. They are a convenient tool in the hands of Israel's enemies, so they are quoted often and their importance is magnified well beyond their numbers. Their existence, in fact, demonstrates the democratic nature of Israel and the Jewish community. The Arab world, on the other hand, tolerates no dissent from imposed opinions.

In Lebanon, my country of origin, it is even [illegal to communicate](#) in any fashion with an Israeli. Because of [my support for peace with Israel](#), I can never visit my own native country.

17. “Israel targets civilians and children”

When civilians or children are unintentionally killed in IDF operations, it is front-page news all over the world, resulting in very negative publicity for Israel. Israel gains nothing from killing Palestinian civilians, but Palestinian terrorist organizations gain world sympathy, which is why they often place civilians in dangerous positions during conflicts with Israel. Israel goes to great extents to avoid civilian casualties. When civilians are killed, it is [in spite of Israel's best efforts](#), not because of them.

Those who mistreat Palestinian children are in fact the Palestinian authorities who [teach them hatred](#) towards Jews and Israel, thus ensuring that the conflict can never be resolved peacefully.

The targeting of Israeli civilians by Palestinian terrorists is largely ignored by mainstream media, but even more surprisingly, while some courageous Arabs such as [Khaled Abu Toameh](#) and [Bassam Tawil](#) often raise the issue of Palestinian terrorists' violence and abuse against Palestinian civilians and

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18. “Israel is an imperialist project”

Jews are aboriginal people to the land of Israel. They are the ones who have been victims of imperialism. They suffered [many massacres](#), including two sieges of Jerusalem by the Romans (63 BC and 37 BC), massacres by the Romans (4-6 BC, 36, 66, 115-117, and 132-136), the massacres by Christians (605 and 1099), the Hebron and Safed attacks by Kurds and Muslims (1517), the destructions of Tiberias and Safed by the Druze and Arabs (1660), the siege of Jaffa by the French army (1799), the Hebron massacre by the Egyptians (1834), the attack on Safed by the Druze and Arabs (1838), The Arab attacks on Petach Tikva ([1886](#)), the riots in Jerusalem instigated the Grand Mufti ([1920](#)), the Jaffa Arab riots ([1921](#)), the Arab Riots in Safed ([1929](#)), the Hebron massacre instigated by the Grand Mufti ([1929](#)), the Great Arab Revolt ([1936-1939](#)), and the Tiberius massacre by Arabs ([1938](#)). As a result of these massacres, many Jews were forced to flee.

As an Arab, it is my duty to recognize the Arab responsibility in several of these massacres, and I wish that other Arabs did the same rather than fabricate claims of imperialism. The Zionist project of allowing Jews to return to their land is in fact the opposite of an imperialist project. It is an attempt to reverse in a small way centuries of imperialist attacks on the Jews. Of course, the dead and their potential descendants can never be brought back, but Israel allows the descendants of the Jews who survived to return to the land that they should never have been forced to leave.

19. “Israeli Jews are European”

Some of Israel’s Jews have European lineage, but it would be false to say that all

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million people. It is logical then to assume that from the original 856,000 Jewish refugees from Arab lands, we now have at least 5 million Jewish refugees and descendants. By that estimate, Arab Jews make up the majority of the six million Israeli Jews. There are also many Israeli Jews who are descendants of Jews who never left the land of Israel. Even among the Israeli Jews whose ancestors lived in Europe, the only ones who would have no Middle Eastern blood are those who converted to Judaism, but conversion to Judaism is relatively rare since Jews, unlike Muslims and Christians, [do not proselytize](#).

Israel's [official numbers from 2015](#) show the following counts based on paternal country of origin for a total of 6.3 million Israeli Jews:

- Israel: 2.8 million.
- Africa: 0.9 million.
- Russia: 0.9 million.
- Asia: 0.7 million.
- Europe: 0.7 million.
- America and Oceania: 0.3 million.

In addition, implying that Israelis who emigrated from Europe to Israel are somehow less worthy than Israelis who have been in the Middle East for generations is offensive. As an Arab who immigrated to Canada, I would not want Canadians to consider me or other Arab Canadians any less worthy of

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The Jewish state has at least as much the right to exist as any other state on earth. Jews have a [continuous history](#) of over 3000 years in the land of Israel, despite being repeatedly massacred and forced to flee. If the Jewish people is not allowed to be independent on that land then no people should be allowed to be independent anywhere. How could I demand that my fellow Lebanese be independent if I can't accept the independence of another people? The reality is that rejecting the Jewish people's right to self-determination cannot be described as anything other than [antisemitism](#), regardless of whether the person rejecting that right is an Arab like me or a leftist European.

21. "Europe supported Zionism because of guilt over the Holocaust"

The reverse is in fact true: Europe's support for Zionism, although always weak, was stronger before the Holocaust than during and after the Holocaust.

The First Zionist Congress took place in [1897](#), 36 years before the Nazi party came to power in Germany. Britain's [Balfour Declaration](#) supporting "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people" occurred in 1917, two decades before the start of the Holocaust, but instead of helping Zionists, Britain imposed restricted immigration of Jews through the [White Papers](#) of 1922, 1930, and 1939, even while the Holocaust was taking place in Europe.

An [embargo was imposed](#) by the United States and supported by Europe on the sale of weapons to Israel and the Palestinian Arabs, starting in December 1947, soon after the United Nations announced a partition plan for Palestine. The embargo did not prevent Arabs from obtaining weapons, but it severely affected Israel which was able to survive only due to secret sales of armaments from

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22. “Israel’s support for LGBT rights is a cover for its crimes”

Israel’s support for LGBT rights [should be praised](#), not demonized. Accusations of “pinkwashing” are in fact themselves a [smokescreen](#) for supporting Israel’s enemies who consistently use terrorism and hatred to ensure that the conflict continues.

As a left-wing Arab, I have supported LGBT rights all my life and I have always been disturbed by the fact that LGBT rights are practically non-existent in the Arab world. Instead of denouncing Israel’s support for LGBT rights, leftists should show their support for Arabs by demanding that Arab states emulate Israel.

23. “The BDS movement is a reasonable response to Israel”

The boycott-divestment-sanctions (BDS) movement is not an appropriate response to Israel because Israel’s actions are lawful and justified. The BDS movement – [founded](#) by Omar Barghouti who [opposes](#) the concept of a Jewish state – is in fact [detrimental](#) to peace, and it is driven by [antisemitism](#) not by peaceful idealism. Even if we ignore the anti-Semitism widely promoted by BDS advocates on university campuses, social media, and elsewhere, the [stated demands](#) of the BDS movement alone show the truth about the BDS movement. The BDS movement presents an image of respectability, but that is [far from the truth](#). Since, its objectives, if achieved, [would result](#) in the killing of Jews and the return of the remaining Jews to the stateless and precarious status that they had before May 1948, the BDS movement represents an anti-Semitism at par with Hamas.

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24. “Hatred of Israel is okay because anti-Zionism is not antisemitism”

Hatred of an entire people is never justified, and it is particularly wrong in the case of hatred of Israel because it is very clearly [based on antisemitism](#) and not on legitimate reasons. The related claim that Arabs cannot be antisemitic because they are Semites is a deflection based on a [misleading and false interpretation](#) of the term [antisemitism](#). As explained by [Encyclopedia Britannica](#), “The term anti-Semitism was coined in 1879 by the German agitator Wilhelm Marr to designate the anti-Jewish campaigns under way in central Europe at that time”. Anti-Zionism [is in fact antisemitism](#), whether the person holding the belief is an Arab like me, a leftist like me, or neither.

25. “Israel is the cause of conflicts in the Middle East”

Israel’s enemies have accused Israel of initiating or encouraging conflicts to divert attention from itself. They have accused Israel for example of supporting ISIS. None of these accusations have ever been supported by credible evidence. The reality is that the Middle East has been involved in wars and conquests for many centuries. The Jews were several times massacred and expelled. Middle Eastern wars have a long history and were caused by several factors unrelated to Israel, including the two world wars, [Shia/Sunni rivalry](#), [Turkish imperialism](#), [Roman imperialism](#), [Persian imperialism](#), the [Muslim empires](#), [European imperialism](#), and [tribalism](#).

Israel on the other hand, has only had one objective, existing in peace, which it has so far not been allowed to do. As an Arab who would like to be able to visit my native country Lebanon without risk of being jailed because I communicate with Israelis, peace cannot come soon enough.

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Palestinians' right to self-determination in their own state. Fred supports a liberal and democratic Middle East where all religions and nationalities, including Palestinians, can co-exist in peace with each other and with Israel, and where human rights are respected. Fred is an atheist, a social liberal, and an advocate of equal rights for LGBT people everywhere.

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